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A Word From Tim Downs - July 2012

Dear Friends,

The Annual Meeting of the Conference held in Birmingham, and organized around the theme "Cultivating a Culture of Call," was an important part of the growing focus on leadership development in the Southeast Conference. Holly MillerShank, the team leader of MESA (Ministry Excellence Support and Authorization) with the national UCC in Cleveland, was our keynoter, helping us peel back the layers to a deeper understanding of multiple paths to ministry and ways in which we can live into them. First Congregational UCC in Birmingham extended us abundant and extravagant hospitality. There was a wonderful spirit of community and common purpose throughout the meeting. Our workshops ranged from the practical to the educational, from financial management in the local church to coaching as a model of engagement of change. The TAP commencement was an occasion to recognize the students of the Birmingham churches, Victory for the World UCC in Stone Mountain, GA, and Holy Trinity Community Church in Nashville, TN who had completed the three-year course of theological study. Many are lay leaders in their own churches and represent another part of the Southeast Conference network of program and support for leadership development. We also celebrated the presence of over fifteen of our members in discernment for ministry.

In our business meeting, the Conference took important steps in shaping our future. We voted overwhelmingly to approve the changes to the UCC Constitution and Bylaws, which will open the way for the national setting of the church to focus leadership and resources more clearly on the common mission of the church through a unified governance structure. We approved a budget that dramatically reduces the deficit which we have carried over recent years and elected new officers as well as the first Conference-wide committee on ministry.

On the Monday following our annual meeting, Associate Conference Minister Kathy Clark shared with me that she has accepted a position as Minister for Members in Discernment on the MESA Team in Cleveland. Her last day of work with the Southeast Conference will be August 31. Kathy has worked with the Conference for thirteen years, and has been instrumental in shaping and leading the ministries through which we have prepared lay and authorized ministers for serving the church. Her leaving is a deep loss to all of us, and certainly to me personally. She has been a good friend and colleague, a person who has taught me how to be a better teacher, pastor, and leader. She has shared her personal and professional gifts with us all with a gracious generosity. The Conference remains committed to the work that Kathy has led, and we

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generosity. The Conference remains committed to the work that Kathy has led, and we are in the midst of preparing plans for assuring the continuation of TAP and PATHWAYS, as well as other parts of Kathy's ministry. You will want to make note that a farewell gathering will be held for Kathy on Saturday, August 25, 5:00-7:30 p.m., at Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. Details will be shared later, but we hope you will be able to be with us to celebrate Kathy's ministry among us, and to wish her well as she prepares to serve our beloved denomination.

Election of New Officers to the Southeast Conference Board of Directors

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference elected a slate of officers to lead us into this year of change. Jim Crabb, a member of Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta, was elected moderator. Jim has served on the Board previously and most notably as treasurer several years ago. Jennifer Austin, a member of Holy Trinity Community UCC in Nashville, was elected to serve as vice-moderator. Jennifer is the executive administrator of her congregation and has led the members through a major capital campaign, along with pastor Cindy Andrews-Looper. Ginny Nixon of Community UCC in Pleasant Hill, TN, will be the immediate past moderator. Jennifer Spears of Garden of Grace UCC in Columbia, SC, will continue as secretary, and Jimmy Loyless of Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA, as treasurer.

In addition to those who will continue to serve on the Board, we welcome the following as new members:

The Rev. Lillian Hallstrand and the Rev. Lawrence Clark, both of Brookmeade Congregational UCC in Nashville;

Jerome Gordon of Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga, TN;

Jon Ritt of Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta;

Desiree Pedescleaux of First Congregational UCC in Atlanta.

One of the most noteworthy actions of the Annual Meeting was the election of a provisional Committee on Ministry gathered from the leadership of the three associations. This committee will lead us into the new protocols and procedures for the preparation, authorization and oversight of ministers in the Southeast Conference. This body will be chaired by Lawrence Clark. It will include the following members:

Henrietta Andrews of First Congregational UCC in Atlanta;

Minister Dorinda Broadnax and Yelanda Collins, both of Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL;

Doug Farmer of Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, SC;

The Rev. Dr. Marvin Morgan of First Congregational UCC in Atlanta, and presently interim pastor of Brookmeade Congregational UCC in Nashville;

Carrole Moss of Victory for the World UCC in Stone Mountain;

Kimberly Peeler-Ringer of Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville;

John Stewart of Church of the Savior (UCC), Knoxville, TN;

The Rev. Wayde Washburn of Sandy Creek UCC, Lafayette, AL.

Peace,

Tim Downs
Conference Minister

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